

# EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

## INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE HMO IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1998

**HON. SAM GEJDENSON**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, September 29, 1998*

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Medicare HMO Improvement Act of 1998.

Earlier this month, nearly 8,000 seniors in my district received perhaps the most frightening news any American can get. Their Medicare HMOs informed them that they are terminating their health insurance by the end of the year. Some of these seniors were recruited only months before through aggressive company marketing campaigns.

Insurers came to the federal government and said "We're private industry, we can run Medicare better than you can while giving more services to seniors. Give us a chance." Well, we gave them a chance and they let our seniors down. They thought they could just jump in and jump out of my district without regard to the health and well-being of the seniors that they had signed up just months ago. This is not acceptable. That is not a responsible way to do business.

The termination announcements sent shock waves through Tolland, Windham and New London counties. At a public meeting that I hosted with Senator CHRIS DODD to discuss this action, 400 seniors gathered to hear about their options for the future. The tension and desperation of my constituents was evident as they vented their frustration and anxiety. One of my constituents, whose wife had recently had a stroke, was so upset about what losing health insurance would mean to him and his wife that after asking a question he had a heart attack. That man, Frederick Kral, died on the way to the hospital.

Under the current system, Medicare HMOs can act with impunity. There is no accountability, no responsibility. Profits are all that matter. Patients and quality health care are secondary. This is just wrong.

My legislation will inject some accountability into the Medicare HMO system. It will change the contract term from one year to three years. This change is designed to discourage HMOs from making short-term promises to seniors only to terminate coverage a year later when they don't make quite as much money as they hoped. It gives the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) authority to enjoin contract terminations for up to one year if public health will be seriously threatened, insurance coverage will be compromised, or the Governor of the state affected requests that the Secretary exercise this authority.

Moreover, my legislation is designed to discourage HMOs from "cherry picking" between regions within a state by offering coverage only in those areas with the highest reimbursement rates. It accomplishes this goal by requiring the Secretary of HHS to terminate all contracts a Medicare HMO has for a metro-

politan statistical area (MSA) if that HMO terminates coverage in any portion of that MSA in that state. I selected the MSA as the geographical unit because it is already used in the law and should discourage "cherry picking" without reducing coverage on a state-wide basis. Finally, if a company terminates coverage and a beneficiary is currently undergoing treatment, this bill requires the HMO to provide 90 days of coverage to allow the patient to continue to receive such treatment. This will ensure that patients under active treatment will have a few additional months to make the transition to another doctor or health plan.

Mr. Speaker, what Medicare HMOs did in my district—and are doing in others across the country—is unreasonable and irresponsible. The Medicare HMO Improvement Act is a reasonable approach which will provide badly needed protection to older Americans.

## THE DISTINGUISHED CAREER OF REPRESENTATIVE LEE HAMIL- TON OF INDIANA

SPEECH OF

**HON. PATSY T. MINK**

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, September 28, 1998*

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and much sadness that I join my colleagues in saying "Aloha" and paying tribute to one of our most respected Members, Congressman LEE HAMILTON. I met LEE over 30 years ago. We were both elected to Congress for the first time in the 1964 LBJ landslide election. Seventy-one Democrats were elected to the House that same year. We made history as the Class of 65. This 89th Congress passed some of the most important legislation: Medicare, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the War Against Poverty, and numerous youth programs.

When you leave, it will be just JOHN CONYERS and I to carry on the work of that famous freshman class of the 89th Congress.

It is hard to imagine a Congress without the strong, steady force of LEE HAMILTON. So many times he has been the voice of reason on the difficult and contentious issues in foreign policy. I have consistently relied on his advice and counsel on many issues, the Gulf War, Bosnia, Iran, Haiti, Russia, Kosova. His opinion and expertise is always respected even among those who did not agree with him. His knowledge about the subject matter and his thorough and conscientious review of all matters to assure the best policy for the good of the Nation are his special contribution to every debate.

Over the years LEE has dealt with numerous world situations and issues that seem so far away from his constituents back home. But no matter if he was dealing with Iran-Contra, weapons proliferation, or the Gulf War, LEE knew how to connect these events to the lives of his constituents.

Not many people think of LEE HAMILTON as a Liberal. I don't know if he would even like that label. But the LEE HAMILTON I know cared deeply about the needs of his people and he worked to make this a better world for our children. He fought to eradicate hunger and disease and worked to be sure education was always a high priority. He consistently proved to be a great supporter of programs to care for the most vulnerable.

In foreign policy as well as in domestic policy he worked diligently for a caring and compassionate outcome.

I know we will continue to see LEE leading this nation in some capacity, but LEE your daily presence here in the House will be missed. As an architect of our foreign policy your guidance for the past 30 years has produced the peace and stability which we now celebrate.

I wish you and Nancy all the best, as you enter this new phase in your life. As you spend time with your family please remember we still will need your advice and counsel. Best wishes and God speed.

## CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4060, ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOP- MENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

SPEECH OF

**HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, September 28, 1998*

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4060, the Energy and Water Development Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1999. I support this bill mainly because it provides \$1,429,885 million for the Army Corps of Engineers construction programs. I am especially grateful that the conference agreement includes language proposed by the House to reimburse the non-Federal sponsor a portion of the Federal share of project costs for the White Oak Bayou, Texas project.

The Administration originally requested \$9.4 million for the continued construction of the Sims Bayou Project in Houston, Texas. The Conference Committee specifically earmarked a total amount of \$12 Million for the Sims Bayou project.

Mr. Speaker, the Sims Bayou Project is a project that stretches through my district. Over the course of recent years, the Sims Bayou has seen massive amounts of flooding. Citizens in my congressional district, have been flooded out of their homes, and their lives have been disrupted.

In 1994, 759 homes were flooded as a result of the overflow from the Sims Bayou. That is 759 families that were forced to leave their homes.

I mainly support the conference report, Mr. Speaker, because the subcommittee has earmarked in this bill \$12 million for the construction and improvement of the Sims Bayou

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